

WE CLAIM:

1. A network based scheduling system for developing a schedule for a sponsoring organization, the system comprising:

a sponsor controlled customer database containing information relevant to individual customers who periodically need to schedule appointments with the sponsoring organization;

a set of sponsor parameters associated with each customer which define possible appointment times for a customer;

a central controller managing a schedule for the sponsoring organization, wherein the central controller operates via a network to

i) contact at least some of the customers concerning the scheduling of appointments,

ii) supply available appointment times to at least some of the customers, with the available appointment times determined by the sponsor parameters associated with the individual customer, and

iii) receive scheduling information from at least some of the customers.

2. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the network is the Internet.

3. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the controller supplies a graphical appointment calendar to at least some of the customers with the available appointment times graphically illustrated, wherein the customer can

schedule an appointment by selecting the icon associated with the desired appointment time.

4. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the controller uses electronic mail to contact at least some of the customers concerning the scheduling of appointments and uses the World Wide Web to supply available appointment times to at least some of the customers and to receive scheduling information from at least some of the customers.

5. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the controller contacts at least some of the customers concerning the scheduling of appointments via off-line communication techniques.

6. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the sponsor parameters for each customer include the availability of sponsor personnel, the availability of sponsor resources, and the time to be allotted for the scheduled appointment.

7. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the controller supplies the sponsor with a real time master schedule via the network.

8. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the controller contacts at least some of the customers via the network concerning rescheduling of appointments due to changes in the sponsor parameters.

9. The scheduling system of claim 8, wherein the rescheduling of appointments is prompted by customer preferences wherein a preferential appointment time becomes available and the customer is subsequently notified by the controller.

10. The scheduling system of claim 1, wherein the sponsor is a medical professional.

11. A method for developing a schedule for a sponsoring organization comprising the steps of:

providing a sponsor controlled customer database containing information relevant to individual customers who periodically need to schedule appointments with the sponsoring organization, a set of sponsor parameters associated with each customer which define possible appointment times for a customer, and a central controller creating a schedule for the sponsoring organization;

contacting via an electronic network at least some of the customers concerning the scheduling of appointments;

supplying via the electronic network available appointment times to at least some of the customers, with the available appointment times determined by the sponsor parameters associated with the individual customer; and

receiving scheduling information via the electronic network from at least some of the customers.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the network is the World Wide Web.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the controller supplies a graphical appointment calendar to at least some of the customers with the available appointment times graphically illustrated, and wherein the customer can schedule an appointment by selecting the icon associated with the desired appointment time.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the controller uses electronic mail to contact at least some of the customers concerning the scheduling of appointments and uses the World Wide Web to supply available appointment times to at least some of the customers and to receive scheduling information from at least some of the customers.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the controller contacts at least some of the customers concerning the scheduling of appointments via off-line communication techniques.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein the sponsor parameters for each customer include the availability of sponsor personnel, the availability of sponsor resources, and the time to be allotted for the scheduled appointment.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein the controller supplies the sponsor with a real time master schedule via the network.

18. The method of claim 11, wherein the controller contacts at least some of the customers via the network concerning rescheduling of appointments due to changes in the sponsor parameters.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the rescheduling of appointments is prompted by customer preferences wherein a preferential appointment time comes available and the customer is subsequently notified by the controller.

20. The method of claim 11, wherein the sponsor is a medical professional.